UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.17/IPF/1996/8
9 February 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
Second session
11-22 March 1996

IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREST-RELATED DECISIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, INCLUDING AN EXAMINATION OF SECTORAL AND CROSS-SECTORAL LINKAGES

Programme element I.1: Progress in national forest and land-use plans

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

As requested by the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests at its first session (see E/CN.17/IPF/1995/3, para. 11), the present report has been prepared for initial discussion of element I.1 of the programme of work of the Panel, "Progress in national forest and land-use plans". The report contains a general overview of programme element I.1; describes the planning context for national forestry programmes; reviews the achievements and lessons learned; mentions the activities planned in preparation for substantive discussion at the third session of the Panel; makes suggestions for discussion of programme element I.1 at the second session; and provides alternatives for action and suggested items for discussion by the Panel, including a list of 12 basic features of national forestry programmes, which is contained in the annex.

Within the context of sustainable development and environmental conservation, trees, forests and forestry have been ascribed a renewed and enhanced role. In most countries, forestry is undergoing radical and complex changes, including:

(a) Balancing increasing and more diversified demands on forest lands and resources with the need to conserve forest ecosystems;

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(b) Integrating all stakeholders, including local communities, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the decision-making process and in implementation;

(c) Adapting to a new balance between the roles of government institutions and the private sector, and of central versus regional and local institutions;

(d) Participating actively in the resolution of cross-sectoral issues, particularly issues affecting land use, poverty, food security, energy needs and environmental protection.

Significant progress has been made during the last five years at the planning and policy levels. However, strategies must often undergo a prolonged sequence of activities: first diagnosis, then planning, finally implementation. Indeed, in many cases implementation has not yet started or is failing, so that forest-sector activities continue as before on unsustainable paths.

In developing countries, sectoral planning in forestry began nearly three decades ago. It was initiated with external assistance to help national planning authorities to assess forestry conditions and formulate long-term strategies, primarily in relation to forest industries. Since the 1960s, the scope of forestry-sector planning has greatly expanded, as mentioned above. One of the strongest justifications for long-term sectoral planning was that it was a way to establish a basis for reforming forest policies. Forestry is currently addressed in several sectoral-level planning frameworks that have international backing.

At present, 54 developing countries are implementing national forestry programmes, and another 26 countries are engaged in planning processes. In addition, three Mediterranean countries and three countries from Eastern Europe are starting planning processes.

The analysis of the situation in the different countries embarked on national forestry programme processes shows that much progress has been made in many countries in the areas of new forestry policies; new legislation; institutional reorganization; redefinition of the role of the State; decentralization of forest-management responsibilities; transfer of responsibility to communities and local groups; transparency of debates and participation in the decision-making process; and coordination and harmonization of actions within coherent, holistic and intersectoral strategic frameworks.

The viability of these national forestry programmes is based on the capacity of countries to commit themselves to policy and institutional reform, as well as on the capacity of the international community to respond fully and in a coordinated manner to their request for external assistance. The most important objective of sector planning is to facilitate a national discussion on the desired directions for change. Reaching consensus may take two or three years, but the consultative and acceptance processes are at least as

essential as the technical analysis process: if planning is conducted by external consultants in a manner not conducive to a continuing process, national forestry programmes stand little chance of being implemented.

Concerning policy reform and intersectoral coordination, two key constraints have been identified:

(a) Slow pace of policy and institutional reforms within the sector: in many countries, the lack of progress and transparency of policy and institutional reform processes has become the most important constraint to the implementation of forestry-sector plans and programmes.

(b) Lack of intersectoral coordination: policies and policy instruments related to land-use planning and land husbandry are still not coordinated and working towards the common goal of sustainable development. Effective high-level mechanisms for intersectoral coordination are more the exception than the rule.

In industrialized countries, perspectives on forests and the perception of their importance in urbanized societies are changing rapidly and may clash with traditional forestry cultures. Competing ideas about the question "Trees and forests, for whom and for what?" have greatly increased in both variety and intensity. An increasing number of individuals and institutions contend that the historical primacy of timber production for industries must be replaced by a new forestry guided by ecologically sustainable development.

Planning is further complicated in countries attempting to make the transition to a new agenda in forestry. The components of this transition can be defined in a number of different ways but usually include enhanced efforts in the following areas: (a) environmental management and social forestry, (b) facilitation rather than control, (c) decentralized and participatory management, and (d) greater attention to markets and prices. The extent to which these emphases are actually internalized in forestry agencies is an open question.

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 7	5
I. THE PLANNING CONTEXT	8 - 10	6
A. Forestry planning since the 1790s	8 - 9	6
B. Definitions and types of planning	10	7
II. STRATEGIC PLANNING PERFORMANCE: OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS	11 - 40	8
A. Forestry sector planning in developing countries	12 - 30	8
1. Planning frameworks	12 - 15	8
2. Actual situation of national planning processes	16 - 17	11
3. Achievements	18 - 22	13
4. Constraints and weaknesses	23 - 30	13
B. Forestry planning in industrialized countries	31 - 34	16
C. Lessons learned	35 - 40	18
1. Key features for planning	35	18
2. Institutional issues	36 - 38	19
3. Policy environments	39 - 40	21
III. PREPARATION FOR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION	41 - 42	23
IV. ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION AND ITEMS SUGGESTED FOR DISCUSSION BY THE PANEL	43 - 45	23

Tables

1.	Perspectives on forests and forestry in the 1790s and 1990s	7
2.	Status of national forestry programmes processes in developing countries and countries in transition, by region, 1996	12
3.	Difficulties encountered in planning the national forests of developed countries	17
Annex.	List of 12 basic features of national forestry programmes	25

INTRODUCTION

1. Element I.1 of the programme of work of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests is guided by the decisions taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session and further elaborated by the Panel at its first session.

2. The Commission defined programme element I.1 as a need to consider actions to promote progress in implementing the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forest (Forest Principles), 1/ as well as chapter 11 and other forest-related chapters of Agenda 21, 2/ by means of national forest and land-use plans and programmes in an open, transparent and participatory process involving Governments and all interested parties, including major groups, particularly indigenous people and local communities.

3. At its first session, the Panel emphasized that preparatory work on programme element I.1 should be based on the provisions of the Forest Principles, and would benefit from consideration of regional initiatives and regional dimensions. Such work should include the preparation of a report on all types of forests, reviewing current approaches to national strategies and noting links between national forest plans and sustainable development strategies/plans, land-use plans, including ecosystems management, and sectoral plans; the report should also contain a synthesis of lessons learned, including lessons learned from participatory forest management approaches at the national and field levels. Preparatory work should also include a report assessing progress made in implementing national forest and integrated land-use plans; should identify gaps in need of further attention; and should focus on improved cooperation and implementation by national Governments of bilateral and multilateral forest-related planning activities and programmes, and on the use of national-level participatory approaches to that end. The Panel decided to schedule programme element I.1 for initial discussion at the current session and substantive discussion at the third session, in September 1996.

4. The present report was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as lead agency for programme element I.1, in consultation with the secretariat of the Panel in the Division for Sustainable Development, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat. Contributions were also received from the Global Forestry Policy Project, the International Academy of Environment, the International Centre for Forestry Research (CIFOR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the Ministry of Cooperation of the Government of France and the World Bank. Other major sources of information included North Carolina State University, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the World Resources Institute (WRI), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Asian Development Bank.

5. In the present report, the words "forest" and "forestry" are used in their broadest sense. The term "forest" encompasses all components of the forest

ecosystem, including woodlots and trees in rural environments. The term "forestry" refers to all forest and forest-related activities, including everything to do with the growing, harvesting and processing of forest vegetation, whether for wood (including fuelwood) or non-wood products, as well as forest ecosystems management, the conservation of flora and fauna found in the forests, the protection of forests, landscapes and heritage site, watershed management, soil conservation, forest-based tourism and national parks. Forestry is concerned with human beings, especially people living in and around forests; therefore "forestry planning" and "national forestry programmes/plans" are used here to denote not only the forests themselves but also people concerned with forests and their activities.

6. The Convention on Biological Diversity, 3/ the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II) and the Forest Principles, as well as current initiatives for the formulation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, all focus on an increased and expanded role for forestry and emphasize the need for improved planning in forestry.

7. The present report analyses the planning context, planning performance and strategic planning proposals for injecting new vitality into the implementation process and accelerating progress. Although its subject concerns all countries of the world, the report provides more information on the developing countries than on the countries in transition and the developed countries; an ongoing survey and analysis will correct this deficiency in the next report to the Panel on programme element I.1.

I. THE PLANNING CONTEXT

A. Forestry planning since the 1790s

8. Strategic planning in forestry is not a new concept. For several hundred years, States and communities have elaborated policies, legislation and strategies in order to control the utilization of the products of forest lands, protect existing forests and restore degraded ones. Many such strategies failed because they were overcome by larger events, such as war, colonization, revolution and land reform.

9. The development of modern planned forestry practices in Western Europe can be traced to the late 1700s, a time of rapid population growth, expanding urbanization, explosive scientific discovery and increasing confidence in mankind's ability to master nature. The scope of forestry-sector planning in the industrial world has expanded gradually to embrace deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, food security, the inability of national forestry administrations to enforce laws and regulations, and institutional contradictions across sectors and strategies. Forestry planning in developing countries has evolved very rapidly to confront the same issues; the perspectives presented in table 1 are common to poor and rich countries alike, despite their vastly different situations.

Table 1. Perspectives on forests and forestry in the 1790s and 1990s

1790s	1990s
Commodities for industrial development are scarce	Natural habitats are scarce after two centuries of industrial development
Forest outputs are timber, game, fuelwood and water	Outputs are many, including complex ecosystem services and ethical and recreational values
Viewpoint: the natural world can be easily managed and controlled	Viewpoint: the profound human impact on the natural world is very difficult to understand or control
Forest-dependent communities are local villages and farms	Communities are local, regional, national and global
Management aims to produce commodities	Management aims to adapt to changing circumstances and preserve future options
Management seeks to sustain harvest yields	Management seeks to sustain the holistic status and health of the forest as a complex ecosystem
Laissez-faire: property owners do as they like with their forests and land	Authorities impose increasing restrictions on property rights in the interest of serving the public good
Foresters have faith in the promise of science and technology to rationalize forestry practices	Foresters apply science and technology, but it is questionable whether they rationalize forestry practices
The forester is an expert and a decision maker	The public is the decision maker acting through democratic processes; the forester is a technical adviser

Source: J. G. Laarman, "Forestry planning: new challenges after two centuries", paper presented at a workshop on forestry-sector planning (Anchorage, Alaska, 18-22 September 1994); the workshop was jointly organized by FAO and the Canadian Forestry Service.

B. Definitions and types of planning

10. In broad terms, planning in forestry should (a) facilitate the articulation of attitudes, values and expectations regarding forestry in the broadest sense; (b) raise questions about the information required to protect and manage trees and forests; (c) define strategies to resolve conflicts or potential conflicts

in forest use; and (d) specify the inputs and resources needed by programmes to move in the directions indicated by planning. Forest-sector, land-use and forest-management planning may be described as follows:

(a) Forestry-sector planning covers all the linkages between a country's forests (or total tree cover) and the aggregate of its human institutions. The forestry sector is defined in relation to owners, managers and users of trees and forests. Context is critical, because the boundaries of forest ownership, management, and use vary from local to global. Sectoral planning in forestry considers the different ways in which owners, managers and users will gain or lose under alternative options for forest protection and management;

(b) Land-use planning deals with the nature and value of land, and how the latter determine its suitability for different purposes. Land-use planning occurs at different levels and scales, from continental to local. Planning indicates the advantages and disadvantages of imposing a specific use on a particular unit of land from physical, economic and social standpoints;

(c) Forest-management planning aims to identify and choose among alternative production and use combinations for specific forest units and aggregations, which are defined by physical, legal or ecosystem boundaries. The planning scope is defined by the resources and decision authority under the control of the manager, which can be an individual or an entire organization, depending on the context.

II. STRATEGIC PLANNING PERFORMANCE: OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS

11. The earliest forestry planning in the 1700s was largely a technical exercise of estimating forest growth rates and computing allowable cuts. Today's context is totally different, encompassing not only alternative production possibilities but also implications for social welfare; two key priorities are public participation and sustainability. The success of forestry planning in meeting the contemporary demands placed on it is considered here in two different contexts: (a) sector planning in developing countries; and (b) forest-management planning in industrialized countries.

A. Forestry sector planning in developing countries

1. Planning frameworks

12. In developing countries, sectoral planning in forestry began nearly three decades ago. It was initiated with external assistance to help national planning authorities assess forestry conditions and formulate long-term strategies, primarily in relation to forest industries. Since the 1960s, the scope of forestry-sector planning has greatly expanded, as mentioned above. One of the strongest justifications for long-term sectoral planning was that it was a way to establish a basis for reforming forest policies. At present, forestry is addressed in several sectoral-level planning frameworks that have international backing, as follows:

(a) Master plans for forestry development (MPFD): they date from the Finnish experience in the 1960s, followed by similar planning experience in Chile, Nigeria and other countries in the 1970s. The early MPFDs were industrial in outlook. Recent master planning in Asian countries has attempted to become broader in scope and philosophy. In 1992, there was agreement at a national forestry action programmes (NFAP)/MPFD coordinator meeting in Indonesia that MPFDs and NFAPs would follow the same principles and operational guidelines;

(b) Tropical Forests Action Plan (Programme) (TFAP): launched in 1985, the initial goal of TFAP was to curb tropical deforestation while meeting local and national forest-related needs. Since its revision in 1991, TFAP has become essentially a framework for strategic planning in forestry through the launching of NFAPs, as well as an entry point for raising awareness on forest-related issues, preparing or updating forest policies, preparing specific action programmes and projects, and stimulating financial and political support to implement such initiatives;

(c) World Bank forestry sector reviews (FSRs): like the MPFD approach in the 1970s, FSRs were considered part of TFAP from 1985 to 1990. Today they are often integrated into rural development strategies;

(d) National environmental action plans (NEAPs): introduced in 1987 by the World Bank, NEAPs focus mainly on least developed countries. The scope of NEAPs covers all environmental issues in addition to forests and forestry. The intent is to lay out a comprehensive strategy to deal with environmental management and provide a specific plan for action. NEAPs do not generally include all aspects of forestry;

(e) Other planning frameworks: first proposed in 1980, national conservation strategies have been put forward through the joint efforts of UCN, WWP and UNDP. UNCED also called for the preparation of national sustainable development strategies.

13. These planning exercises are often pursued separately, although they have much in common: each emphasizes the integration of sectoral planning with national-level planning; each aims to strengthen legal systems and institutions as a requirement for improved policy-making; each promotes multisectoral and multidisciplinary planning to better formulate coordinated programmes and projects; each advocates the use of planning as a means of building national consensus on broad goals and programme directions; and finally, each stresses public and non-governmental organizations' participation in the planning process. The differences that remain are mainly differences of scope and institutional composition.

14. The presence of multiple planning frameworks raises questions about achieving planning coordination. The ideal is complementarity; as stated in one of the NFAP operating principles, by complementing and reinforcing existing and planned national and international initiatives, NFAPs will contribute to effective, comprehensive and coordinated action.

15. Many Governments, however, have started different planning frameworks for the environment and natural resources at different times or simultaneously. Multiple frameworks generate confusion at both political and administrative levels about which frameworks prevail over others; often compete for the small pool of highly qualified national personnel available to direct and implement the planning exercises; and raise expectations about sectoral planning that are not achievable except through persistent commitment at the national and international levels.

Box 1. National forestry planning processes

Many names are utilized to designate national forestry processes, such as "forestry master plan", "national forestry action programme or plan", "national forestry development plan", "forestry agenda" and "forestry programme framework". In addition, multisectoral strategies for environment and strategies for natural resources management have promoted "national conservation strategies", "national environmental action plans", "green plans", "national natural resources management programmes", "programmes de gestion des terroirs villageois", "national plans to combat desertification" and "integrated Conservation and development Programmes". All these multisectoral strategies include some but generally not all forestry components.

The many frameworks supported by international governmental or non-governmental organizations create confusion and overlap, waste energy and money, and often do not improve institutional conflicts at either the national or international levels.

Curtailing this proliferation of planning frameworks should be one of the main objectives of the international community. Although it is the responsibility of each country to integrate all plans and programmes in one unified national plan/programme, it is also the obligation of the international community to coordinate efforts rather than follow its own objectives and priorities without consultation and collaboration. Several developing countries have recently succeeded in integrating or internalizing all such plans and programmes; this type of evolution must be encouraged and a national forestry programme suited to the needs of each country must be promoted and supported.

Box 2. Improving planning frameworks

The shortcomings of some planning efforts are well known. Many national strategies, plans and programmes have been prepared by foreign consultants with minimal national participation. One of the main early criticisms of TFAP concerned the insufficient participation of the people whose livelihoods depend on forests, in particular indigenous people. Other criticisms include the following:

(a) TFAP focused heavily on industrial utilization and plantation development to the detriment of other objectives, such as the management of protected areas;

(b) Its top-down approach failed to stimulate a consultative and interactive dialogue on issues;

(c) It did not pay sufficient attention to the macroeconomic and sectoral policies that contribute to deforestation and forest degradation.

These and related concerns have prompted adjustments to make planning frameworks more country-driven and process-oriented, rather than donor-driven and project-oriented. Other adjustments in goals and objectives include increased emphasis on (a) participatory planning and implementation, (b) multidisciplinary and multisectoral depth and breadth, (c) policy reforms both inside and outside forestry sectors, (d) forest protection and sustainability, (e) coordinating with other planning and policy initiatives, and (f) strengthening the institutional setting in which forestry operates.

All these adjustments are well reflected in various recommended principles and guidelines that have been developed by a wide range of institutions, including FAO, UNDP, the World Bank, regional development banks, IUCN, IIED and WRI.

2. Actual situation of national planning processes

16. The NFAP Update, published by the FAO Forestry Department, reports on all national-level strategic planning processes for the forestry sector, regardless of title or framework followed. The July 1995 issue covers 98 countries, including two from Eastern Europe and two from the Mediterranean. NEAPs and other national conservation strategies are not considered separately but are analysed in relation to forestry planning.

17. An overview of the progress made by these countries in the elaboration and implementation of national forestry programmes is provided in table 2; it should be noted that 15 of the countries implementing national forestry programmes are now in the process of revising their initial programmes and formulating revised action plans.

Table 2. Status of national forestry programmes processes in developing countries and countries in transition, by region, 1996

Status in 1996	Number of countries per region				
	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America/ Caribbean	Mediterranean countries	Eastern Europe and CIS a/
Formulated before UNCED: in revision process	4	5	6	0	0
Formulated before UNCED: in implementation	5	5	5	0	0
Formulated since UNCED: in implementation	3	1	12	0	0
Formulated since UNCED: ready to be implemented	4	3	1	0	0
Subtotal (formulated)	16	14	24	0	0
Planning process under way	6	4	2	0	0
Planning process initial stage	7	6	1	3	3
Subtotal (in planning process)	13	10	3	3	3
Subtotal (process ongoing)	29	24	27	3	3
Process stopped at implementation phase b/	4	0	3	0	0
Process stopped at planning phase b/	5	0	2	0	0
Subtotal (process stopped)	9	0	5	0	0
Process not yet started	10	1	2	14	18
Total countries	48	25	34	17	21

a/ Commonwealth of Independent States.

b/ Political instability and discontinuity, wars and local conflicts are the major causes of the interruption of planning and implementation processes.

3. Achievements

18. At present, 54 developing countries are implementing national forestry programmes, and another 26 countries are engaged in planning processes. In addition, 3 Mediterranean countries and 3 countries from Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are starting planning processes.

19. The analysis of the situation in the different countries embarked on national forestry programme processes shows that much progress has been made in many countries regarding new forestry policies; new legislation; institutional reorganization; the redefinition of the role of the State; the decentralization of forest-management responsibilities; the transfer of responsibility to communities and local groups; the transparency of debates and participation in the decision-making process; and the coordination and harmonization of actions within coherent, holistic and intersectoral strategic frameworks.

20. National forestry programmes have permitted countries to advance towards medium and long-term planning in the forestry sector. Many countries have identified the main forestry problems and their effects, as well as the sector's opportunities and the constraints hindering its development, the main actors and their responsibilities, and the options for the sector to contribute to regional and national development.

21. In many countries, there have been positive effects on national planning, such as the integration of forestry in national sustainable development plans; the upgrading of forestry institutions; the creation of environmental committees or commissions; the promulgation of laws strengthening forest and environmental management; and the implementation of important projects. There has also been some positive impact on the mobilization of national and international financial resources for the sector (see E/CN.17/IPF/1996/5).

22. The viability of these national forestry programmes is based on the capacity of countries to commit themselves to policy and institutional reforms, and the capacity of the international community to respond fully and in a coordinated manner to their request for external assistance. The most important objective of sector planning is to facilitate a national discussion on the desired directions for change. Reaching consensus may take two or three years, and the consultative and acceptance process are at least as essential as the technical analysis. If planning is conducted by external consultants in a manner not conducive to a continuing process, national forestry programmes stand little chance of being implemented.

4. Constraints and weaknesses

23. The key constraints to the effective and efficient implementation of national forestry programmes have been reviewed in several studies.

(a) Policy reform and intersectoral coordination

24. Two key constraints have been identified:

(a) Slow pace of policy and institutional reforms within the sector: in many countries, the lack of progress and transparency in the policy and institutional reform processes has become the most important constraint to the implementation of forestry-sector plans and programmes;

(b) Lack of intersectoral coordination: policies and policy instruments related to land-use planning and land husbandry are still not coordinated and working towards the common goal of sustainable development. Effective high-level mechanisms for intersectoral coordination are more the exception than the rule (see box 3).

25. These constraints, which in many countries are becoming the biggest hindrance to the effectiveness of forestry action plans and programmes, including international financing, are symptoms of a more fundamental problem that is often labelled a lack of political commitment, reflecting conflicts of interest between various interest groups and between national and international priorities. The sources of such constraints are essentially political: land tenure and use is a divisive issue, related to regional, ethnic, cultural and social conflicts of interest, among others. In addition, the political realities of many countries, such as the need to balance the budget or to satisfy the demands of certain key constituencies, make Governments forgo long-term benefits for short-term gains, regardless of their social and environmental consequences.

26. In many developing countries, forests are cleared to relieve the demographic pressure on existing agricultural land. Deforestation is therefore closely related to how the use of the national land resources of the country is organized (see E/CN.17/IPF/1996/2). It is naive to believe that a programme dealing with a marginal sector like forestry, often representing only a few per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), can have a major impact on such macrolevel issues. The most effective policy measures related to deforestation usually fall outside the forestry sector and concern population and human development policies, land distribution and tenure, industrial development, trade etc.

27. If a national forestry programme is to have an impact on the above-mentioned constraints, it needs to be adopted as an important instrument at the highest political level, and must be linked to a broader and higher-level development planning exercise. Politicians must be involved in its formulation; politically compelling arguments for forest conservation and sustainable forestry development must be found; and a critical mass of well-informed and motivated key decision makers committed to the plan or programme must be created. Experience in many countries indicates that politicians are receptive to such instruments, particularly in areas where concerns about the environment and forests are becoming widely recognized. In addition, the role of the media is essential in raising awareness.

Box 3. National forestry planning and national land-use planning

Forests are only one among many options for the use of land. A dynamic situation exists regarding the relative importance of land uses in the world. In developing countries, 720 million hectares (ha) of land are under crops (29 per cent of the total area suitable for agriculture); by the year 2010, that figure is expected to increase to 850 million ha, a gain of 130 million ha, with much of the additional area to come from land now covered with forests. In developed countries, the situation is the opposite. Efforts are now under way (for example, in the European Union) to reduce agricultural surpluses by releasing land from farming. Returning such land to forestry is among the options being considered.

Sustainable forest management needs to be practised within the framework of an effective land-use planning process that defines the place of trees and forests in overall land use within a dynamic context.

The objective of chapter 10 of Agenda 21 is to facilitate the allocation of land to the uses that provide the greatest sustainable benefits, and to promote the transition to a sustainable and integrated management of land resources. To that end, environmental, social and economic issues should be considered, in particular the rights of individuals and groups, such as indigenous people and women.

However, as previously stated in the report of the Secretary-General on an integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources (E/CN.17/1995/2), there is still a lack of sufficiently detailed information on land resources at the national level. As a result, very few countries have developed national land-use policies and plans, and there is still little development of the procedures and institutional structures necessary to enable integrated and logical action.

In the absence of national land-use policies and plans, each sector tries to develop its own strategy, thus creating the greatest constraint to the development of a more productive and sustainable use of land, which is precisely this fragmented and sector-oriented approach to the matching of land resources and human needs.

(b) Planning and implementation strategies

28. The major weaknesses in the planning and implementation of forestry development at the national level include:

(a) Prevalence of top-down planning and implementation: despite a common understanding that successful forestry interventions are demand-driven (i.e., based on local problems, priorities, resources, knowledge and traditions), too little has been achieved in making bottom-up planning and

implementation concepts operational. At the project level, grass-roots participation is increasingly applied, but such experience has not been effectively transferred to the national level;

(b) Lack of clearly defined priorities for implementation: many forestry action plans and programmes remain long shopping lists of projects without clearly defined priorities among or within the various development programmes. Linkages between programmes and programme components are not recognized;

(c) Lack of national capacity: national capacity for the planning and implementation of forestry programmes is not adequate for the sustainability of the proposed policy and institutional reforms and development programmes.

(c) Funding and coordination with and between donors

29. The funding and coordination of sources - private and public, domestic and international - are obviously critical concepts for national forestry programmes (for detailed consideration of these issues, see E/CN.17/IPF/1996/5). Project funding often does not result in comprehensive effective programmes and progress towards national development objectives. The World Bank and other development banks have suggested adopting a broad sectoral approach to investment funding. A sector investment programme would be based on a sector strategy such as a national forestry programme. This would help avoid shifting priorities, and would ensure mutual understanding of objectives, commitments and responsibilities. It would also improve inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

30. Based on the principles of the broad sector approach UNDP has developed a concept of forest partnership agreements between a country and donor community to coalesce national commitments and donor support for national forestry programmes. Such programmes would focus on countries with a strong national commitment to control deforestation, and would also target the underlying causes of deforestation.

B. Forestry planning in industrialized countries

31. In industrialized countries, perspectives on forests and the perception of their importance in urbanized societies are changing rapidly and may clash with traditional forestry cultures. Competing ideas regarding the question "Trees and forests, for whom and for what?" have greatly increased in both variety and intensity. An increasing number of individuals and institutions contend that the historical primacy of timber production for industries must be replaced by a new forestry guided by ecologically sustainable development.

32. The proposed reform of forestry concepts gives priority to an ecosystems approach, nature conservation, the maintenance of biodiversity and non-timber amenities, and also raises questions about public control over private forests. But although social perceptions about forests and forestry have been changing rapidly, planning and practices on the part of forest owners, including Governments, have been slower to adjust, which partly explains the serious criticisms that now seem to paralyse various public forestry agencies.

Table 3. Difficulties encountered in planning the national forests of developed countries

Issue	Consequences
Planning relies on a complex computer model.	Forest plans are so technical that opportunities for public participation are limited. Only a few experts can understand the technical trade-offs. The planning model does not adequately capture the aesthetic and spiritual values often very important to citizens.
Planning compares alternative output combinations but avoids discussing practices (e.g., clear-cutting).	Key policy issues are omitted from the planning framework.
Plans are presented in long reports, bureaucratic language and many large data tables.	Reports frustrate attempts to understand the substance of the issues.
Planners use passive and selective approaches to solicit public participation (mainly of local and regional commodity interests).	The approach omits wider conservation and environmental interests, which later respond with criticisms.
Public participation is invited, if at all, only at a late stage in the planning process.	This makes the plan vulnerable to unanticipated objections when it is finally released to the public.
Planning relies mainly on one-way communications; it does not seek interactive discussion.	Outside interests develop their own vision of what forest plans should include, without consulting with the forest service.
Contentious issues are obscured in plans in an attempt to avoid confrontation.	Failure to explicitly recognize disputes results in plans being contested in the courts.

Source: Same as table 1, adapted from C. V. Barber, N. C. Johnson and E. Hafild, Breaking the Logjam: Obstacles to Forest Policy Reform in Indonesia and the United States (Washington, D.C., World Resources Institute, 1994).

33. In principle, planning for publicly owned forests takes place in a shared-power setting of different stakeholders who legitimately claim and defend different interests. Planning is expected to mediate among these diverse interests by choosing among different forest management options.

34. However, current planning frameworks do not necessarily achieve this. The cases of national forests in the United States of America and in France are instructive, because they illustrate that forest management plans may be sharply criticized even after substantial technical/scientific efforts have been devoted to planning. As indicated in table 3, such problems are mainly institutional in nature. Planning may produce results that are not transparent to the public or even to foresters; the situation may be further exacerbated by the release of written plans that are long, complex and difficult to understand.

C. Lessons learned

1. Key features for planning

35. The preceding performance review in two different contexts of forestry planning suggests a number of lessons common to both developing and industrialized countries, the most important being:

(a) Planning is vision: success in planning requires the establishment of a shared vision of the future and the creation of the will and capacity to move towards that vision;

(b) Planning is a participatory process: virtually all observers of the subject believe that planning works best when it is participatory from beginning to end. Interaction must be deliberately created and facilitated, not left to chance (see box 4);

(c) Planning is about sociopolitical differences: it is less about technical forestry alternatives than about how to lessen and accommodate competing sociopolitical claims on forests;

(d) Planning begins with social and cultural values: such values, along with the provision of basic needs, weigh heavily in what people think about forests;

(e) Planning must be incremental and flexible: public participation, shared communications and information feedback enable planners to periodically redirect planning as realities change. Planning must be designed as an exercise in learning;

(f) Planning relies on the centrality of process, the quality of participation and the facilitation of the best possible relationships among stakeholders;

(g) Tremendous capacity-building efforts will be necessary in developing countries to achieve participatory planning through overcoming obstacles related to communication, transportation, language and culture, and institutional decrepitude.

2. Institutional issues

36. Because complexity and a certain amount of confrontational behaviour are inevitable in forestry planning, the quality of the institutional environment makes a substantial difference for planning success or failure. Equally important is the quality of linkages with other units of government, the general public and its special interests, and non-governmental organizations. Many public forestry administrations struggle with inadequate institutional capacity, often despite many years of faltering efforts to grow stronger.

37. Planning is further complicated in countries attempting to make the transition to a new agenda in forestry. The components of this transition can be defined in a number of different ways, but usually include enhanced efforts to establish (a) environmental management and social forestry, (b) facilitation rather than control, (c) decentralized and participatory management, and (d) greater attention to markets and prices. The extent to which such emphases are truly internalized in forestry agencies is an open question. Progress towards implementing the new agenda depends on a number of capacities:

(a) Capacity to visualize and propose forward-looking plans, policies and strategies for forestry in national development programmes (i.e., planning how to plan);

(b) Capacity to obtain and utilize a strong information base (statistics and data) to support decision-making in the forestry sector;

(c) Capacity to obtain and utilize the participation of a variety of clients (i.e., special interests) in setting agendas and policy-making;

(d) Capacity to coordinate with other governmental agencies in land-use planning, development policy and other intersectoral questions;

(e) Capacity to develop and implement sound pricing policies, tax policies, subsidies, credits and other economic instruments in forestry;

(f) Capacity to carry out activities at the regional and local levels, such as activities related to personnel numbers and qualifications, management structures, reporting and communications, and physical infrastructure;

(g) Capacity for budgeting, accounting and handling funds;

(h) Capacity to develop and utilize managerial experience;

(i) Capacity to positively affect public opinion about forestry policies and programmes through news media, public relations departments and other means.

Box 4. Strategic options for developing a full representative and supportive role for non-governmental organizations in planning processes

Options are listed in order of a possible sequence in the development of a planning process:

1. Independent capacity needs assessment/national inventory of non-governmental organizations, with information on strengths, weaknesses, problems, resources and perceived needs of each organization.

2. Full disclosure of information, and development and implementation of an information and communication strategy, based where possible on a non-governmental organizations coalition.

3. Non-governmental organizations as people's representatives in the steering committee and other formal institutional mechanisms.

4. National workshop(s) to develop a strategy for participation in the planning process with the non-governmental organizations represented.

5. Development of criteria for determining who should participate in order to ensure that all interests are represented in the planning process.

6. Rights and responsibilities of the non-governmental organizations-Government relationship defined through consensus, and formalized in writing and/or actions. Development of a procedure for reconciling possible points of disagreement in the pursuit of common goals.

7. Indicators of development, participation and capacity developed with non-governmental organizations.

8. Preliminary issues paper identifying key information needs to ensure participation, prepared with strong non-governmental organization input.

9. Training in participatory techniques and approaches for national non-governmental organizations.

10. Programme to strengthen non-governmental organizations, including support for a national coalition, training opportunities and core support for the organizations directly involved in assisting participatory local studies, microplanning and participatory evaluation.

11. Participatory local studies (stemming from the needs identified in the issues paper, see option 8 above) facilitated by non-governmental organizations.

12. Non-governmental organizations as people's representatives in round table of donors discussing financial requirements.

13. Participatory environmental projects, developed and implemented by local communities, facilitated by non-governmental organizations.

14. Microplanning of projects with involvement of local communities, facilitated by non-governmental organizations.

15. Participatory evaluation of projects and regular review of the planning process with non-governmental organizations.

38. Several variants of capacity-building along these lines are under way. The drive and approach to augment these capacities must develop internally and cannot be imposed from the top or outside. Marginalizing key players, such as forestry agencies, can be counter-productive. Moreover, prospects for transition to a new forestry agenda depend on a realistic assessment of the starting-point. Planning cannot neglect the many small steps necessary for genuine progress.

3. Policy environments

39. Forestry planning finds itself embroiled in volatile controversies over the wide choice of available policy strategies. Traditionally, forestry has relied heavily on command-and-control laws, regulations, and penalties; such an approach does not correct problems but creates new ones. Free-market strategies also fail, because forestry produces an abundance of non-market goods, services and values.

40. If neither laissez-faire nor control approaches promote social welfare, what are the alternatives? This question has not been adequately debated and requires far more discussion at all levels of forestry planning. Most resource economists argue for a third path of economic incentives, but it is not clear whether forestry planners and policy makers subscribe to this doctrine. Command-and-control methods remain popular for reasons of self-interest.

Box 5. National forestry planning and indigenous people

Chapter 26 of Agenda 21, "Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities", concentrates on the improvement, protection and recognition of the rights of indigenous people, stating that they should be involved at the national and local levels in resource management and conservation strategies, such as those suggested in other programme areas of Agenda 21 (para. 26.3 (c)).

The Forest Principles recognize the importance of this involvement for all forest people, stating that Governments should promote and provide opportunities for the participation of interested parties, including local communities and indigenous people, in the development, implementation and planning of national forest policies. They also state that appropriate indigenous capacity and local knowledge regarding the conservation and sustainable development of forests should be recognized, respected, recorded, developed and, as appropriate, introduced in the implementation of programmes, and that any the benefits should be equitably shared with them. Articles 8 and 10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity support this principle in legal terms.

Until the beginning of the 1990s, very few planning processes promoted the participation of indigenous people in policy programmes and projects formulation. These people felt marginalized and ignored because their political institutions were not recognized, and they suffered from the development directed from above. During the last five years, some progress has been observed, in particular due to the creation and action of national and international alliances of indigenous people. In some cases, specific action programmes have been developed by them. The following initiatives are suggested:

(a) National forestry strategies should be developed with the full participation of local and indigenous people in order to enhance environmental, political, economic and social assessments, and proposals for agrarian reform, and in order to secure the rights of indigenous and local communities to their lands, resources and cultures;

(b) Responsible logging and other exploring activities in forests should take full account of the social, economic and political aspects of development. This orientation will involve cross-sectoral planning that enhances sustainable development and embraces both the production and livelihood of local people, so that development builds up from the forest floor and is not imposed from above;

(c) The political and social problems facing local people need to be resolved in favour of the poor and marginalized, in terms of not only their rights but also their empowerment.

III. PREPARATION FOR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION

41. For the third session of the Panel, the Secretary-General will prepare a report on programme element I.1 containing further proposals for action guided by the initial discussion of the Panel at its second session. During the first session, the Government of Germany made a proposal to sponsor an expert consultation on implementing the Forest Principles on the theme "Promotion of national forest and land-use programmes". The main expert consultation will be held in Munich from 16 to 21 June 1996. In preparation for the consultation, the Forestry Advisers Group, in cooperation with the respective bilateral and multilateral organizations, will support developing countries engaging in consultations on the promotion of national forest and land-use programmes. The consultation is intended to contribute to programme elements I.1 and II (International cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer).

42. The results are expected to include suggestions for discussion by the Panel of:

(a) Integration of forestry-sector planning with national planning cycles;

(b) Coordination of various internationally initiated planning frameworks;

(c) Coherence of national forest policy and programmes with the various international agreements and United Nations resolutions;

(d) Efficient and effective use of existing international technical and financial mechanisms, and their comparative advantages for different key issues and subsectors in forestry at the national level.

IV. ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION AND ITEMS SUGGESTED FOR DISCUSSION BY THE PANEL

43. Sustainable forest management requires looking ahead over long time horizons. Yet contemporary opinion leaders have introduced new concepts and priorities into discussions of the question "Trees and forests, for whom and for what?". In part, this reflects increased sensitivity and sometimes alarm about perceived threats to nature, such as worries about forest health and deforestation. This is joined by increasing sociopolitical interest in the rights of indigenous peoples and the rural poor to maintain and improve their forest uses. The biological basis of forest management remains largely unchanged, but its social and political settings are vastly different from those of even 10 or 20 years ago. This new context demands a rethinking of planning priorities, tools and processes.

44. Allowing reasonable latitude for cultural differences, the following concentration areas are widely relevant:

(a) Public participation: whether in industrialized or developing countries, and at multiple planning levels, forestry planning is expected to be highly participatory so as to fairly address the question "Trees and forests, for whom and for what?". Planners need strategies to seek the views of groups

and individuals that would otherwise be underrepresented, such as those disadvantaged in terms of communications or sociopolitical power;

(b) Conflict management: wide participation in planning invites inevitable conflicts. From its inception, planning must anticipate how conflicts will be lessened and negotiated;

(c) Non-market and non-use values: the issue here is how to broaden the scope of forestry planning to address the management of the total natural environment. Leading themes include ecosystems approaches, long-term sustainability, the preservation of future options and policies that account for indirect (mainly ecological) and intrinsic values;

(d) Socio-economic performance: forestry controls and incentives must be consistent with a definition of efficiency. In addition, groups and individuals who receive forest benefits should pay the cost of providing them;

(e) Multilevel coordination: sectoral planning sets strategic directions and targets. Area, project, forest management and enterprise planning define opportunities at lower levels. How can top-down and bottom-up planning be connected to make each complement the other?

45. Some of the basic features of national forestry programmes are listed in the annex. The Panel may wish to provide guidance to the further conceptual development of such programmes, as well as to the activities to be carried out in preparation for its third session.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), resolution 1, annex III.

2/ Ibid., annex II.

3/ See United Nations Environment Programme, Convention on Biological Diversity (Environmental Law and Institutions Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

Annex

LIST OF 12 BASIC FEATURES OF NATIONAL FORESTRY PROGRAMMES

1. Sustainability of forest development. The essence and main purpose of a national forestry programme are to ensure the conservation, management and sustainable development of forest resources.

2. National sovereignty and country leadership. National forestry programmes are national initiatives for which the country must assume full leadership and responsibility.

3. Partnership. National forestry programmes strive to bring together all stakeholders in a process for which they will feel concerned and committed. The strength of this partnership will depend on its ability to draw upon the specific capacities of individual partners.

4. Participation. In a national forestry programme, issues, options and the resulting policies, strategies and programmes are agreed upon through participatory decision-making and consensus-building among all interested partners. Transparency and sharing of information are essential for consensus-building.

5. Holistic and intersectoral approach. National forestry programmes approach forests as diverse ecosystems comprising many interdependent elements in dynamic equilibrium, producing a variety of goods and services. Forestry includes trees in rural areas, and is practised within the context of sustainable land management, environmental stability and social and economic development. Forest dwellers are also part of this ecosystem.

6. A long-term iterative process. A national forestry programme is a cyclic process comprising planning as well as implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities. It is also an ongoing process that continuously reflects changes in the environment and the acquisition of new knowledge, even during implementation. Concrete targets and timetables are required, as well as periodic independent review and reporting.

7. Capacity-building. An essential element of a national forestry programme. Throughout the process, actions are taken to develop the planning and implementation capacity of the national institutions and other key actors with a view to decreasing dependence on external assistance, when necessary.

8. Policy and institutional reforms. One of the priorities of national forestry programmes is to ensure that the policy and institutional framework is conducive to sustainable forestry development. Programmes must address policy and institutional issues in a comprehensive manner that recognizes the interdependencies and interlinkages among sectors.

9. Consistency with the national policy framework and global initiatives. A national forestry programme must link national sustainable development plans with regional and local strategies. They should be integrated in land-use

planning that is realized at the national and local levels, as well as in programmes that are broader in scope, such as environmental action plans and actions to implement Agenda 21 and related conventions and initiatives.

10. Raising awareness. A national forestry programme must raise the visibility of the forestry sector and its priority in national agendas. The full value of forests and trees must be recognized, as well as their contribution to social, economic and environmental well-being.

11. National policy commitment. A national forestry programme must be backed by the long-term commitment of all national actors, particularly at political and decision-making levels.

12. International commitment. It is essential to ensure the long-term commitment of the international community and its institutions, which should respect the policies, strategies and programmes approved by countries and should adjust their own priorities accordingly.